Just as our Blessed Mother Mary and the Evangelist, called John, came together at the foot of the Cross to serve Christ crucified, so also do the parish families bearing their names come together to serve God by serving each other and all who make up the Body of The Risen Lord.

**St. John the Evangelist**
115 Middlesex Street
North Chelmsford

**St. Mary**
25 North Road
Chelmsford

**Weekend Mass Schedule**
- Saturday • 4:00 PM
- Sunday • 8:30 AM, 10:30 AM & 5:00 PM

**Weekday Mass Schedule**
- Monday - Friday • 9:00 AM

Saturday 9:00 am Mass alternates between parishes. Refer to calendars.

**Reconciliation**
- Saturday • 3:00 - 3:45 PM or by appointment

**Eucharistic Adoration**
- First Friday of the Month •
- Monday - Wednesday • 9:30 - 11:30 am in the OPC Chapel

**Weekend Mass Schedule**
- Saturday • 4:00 PM
- Sunday • 7:00 AM, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 6:00 PM

**Weekday Mass Schedule**
- Monday - Friday • 7:00 AM

**Reconciliation**
- Saturday • 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM or by appointment

**Eucharistic Adoration**
- Thursday • 3:00 - 9:00 PM
- Friday • 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM
- Saturday • 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM in the Parish Center Chapel

**Parish Office Hours**
- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday • 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
- Wednesday • 9:30 AM - 5:00 PM
- Friday • 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
- Sunday • 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

**Masses are Available via Live Stream**
Visit [www.chelmsfordcatholic.org](http://www.chelmsfordcatholic.org)
LIVEVIEW resides on the right-hand sidebar of the home page

**Prayer Line**
To have prayers said for yourself or a loved one, call the parish office and ask for ext 223.
St. Mary Calendar

- **Sunday, December 1**
  - Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 6
  - Children’s Liturgy of the Word • 11 am Mass • PC Chapel
  - Group Baptism • 2:00 pm • Church
  - Collaborative PPC Meeting • 7:00 pm • PC Conf Room 1

- **Monday, December 2**
  - Matthew Bible Study • 10 am - 12 pm • PC Conf Room 1
  - Altar Server Training • 4:00 - 5:00 pm • St. John Church
  - Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church
  - Seminarian Presentation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church (or LiveView)
  - Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Tuesday, December 3**
  - Altar Server Training • 4:00 - 5:00 pm • St. John Church
  - EPIC Bible Study • 7:00 - 8:30 pm • Parish Hall
  - Fr. Brian Presentation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church (or LiveView)
  - Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Wednesday, December 4**
  - Boy Scout Troop 77 • 7:00 - 8:30 pm • Parish Hall
  - Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church
  - Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Thursday, December 5**
  - Rosary Makers • 10:30 am • PC Conf Room 2
  - Rosary • 12:00 - 1:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel
  - Adoration • 3:00 - 9:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel
  - Social Justice Committee Meeting • 7:00 pm • PC MR 2
  - Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Friday, December 6**
  - Adoration • 7:30 am - 9:00 pm • PC Adoration Chapel
  - Knitting and Crocheting • 3:00 - 5:00 pm • Parish Hall
  - Pray the Rosary • 7:00 pm • Family Prayer Room

- **Saturday, December 7**
  - NO 9:00 am Mass: Mass at St. John this week
  - Catholic Men’s Group • 7:45-8:45 am • PC MR 2
  - Adoration • 9:30 am - 3:00 pm • PC Chapel
  - Reconciliation • 11:00 am - 12 noon • Church
  - Altar Server Training • 11:00 am - 12 noon • St. John Church
  - Music Ministry Rehearsals • 2:30 - 3:45 pm • Conf Room B
  - Anointing of the Sick, following 4 pm Mass • Church
  - Messiah Sing • 7:00 pm • Church

- **Sunday, December 8**
  - Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 6
  - Grace Notes Rehearsal • 8:10-8:45 am • Church
  - Children’s Liturgy of the Word • 11 am Mass • PC Chapel
  - Holy Land Tour Info Meeting • 1:00 pm • Church
  - Table Ministry • 1:00 - 4:00 pm • Kitchen
  - Town Hall Meeting • 3:00 - 4:00 pm • Church

St. Mary Spirit of Christmas

The trees are up, and we ask that you, if you are able, participate in this endeavor that brings smiles to those less fortunate. **NOTE that there is only 1 week to have gifts returned!**

1. Select a gift tag from the tree and purchase (for no more than $30) the requested item.
2. Wrap the item (only if requested) and securely attach the gift tag.
3. As you wrap, say a prayer for the person who will be receiving the gift.
4. Return wrapped gift(s) to the Parish Center Conference Room 1 December 7th or 8th.

**NOTE:** In order to avoid loss, all “Gift Card” gifts are to be placed in the GIFT CARD DROP BOX.

The charities will be picking up the gifts on the morning of the 10th so PLEASE... return them on time!

If you would be willing to help collect the gifts after any of the Masses on drop-off day, please contact Rae at (978) 505-4589 or Diane at (617) 470-7797. If you are able to volunteer a few hours of your time on the morning of December 9th to help sort the gifts, we will be in the Parish Center Conference Room 1 at 9 am.

St. Mary 11 am MASS GOERS

Please be aware that the duration of the 11:00 am Mass next Sunday, December 8th, will be slightly extended due to our welcoming of a new child into the family through the Sacrament of Baptism.

We do hope you will decide to celebrate this joyous occasion with us.

Feast of St. Nicholas

December 6th

St. Nicholas Day is mostly celebrated in Northern Europe. Celebrations include gifts left in children’s shoes. Children put a shoe outside their bedroom doors or in front of the fireplace on the eve of St. Nicholas Day, and hope to find candy, coins and maybe a small gift when they wake.
St. John Calendar

- **Sunday, December 1**
  Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 7
  NO Children’s Liturgy of the Word this week
  Coffee and Donuts, following 8:30 am Mass • Mariotti
  Prayer Shawl Ministry, following 8:30 am Mass • Linehan

- **Monday, December 2**
  Adoration, following 9:00 am Mass • OPC Chapel
  Altar Server Training • 4:00 - 5:00 pm • Church
  Families with Addiction Support Group • 7:00 pm • NPC
  Lessons and Carols • 7:00 pm • Church
  Reconciliation • 7:00 - 8:00 pm • Church
  Seminarian Presentation • 7 - 8 pm • St. Mary Church (or LiveView)
  SVdP Meeting • 7:00 pm • OPC

- **Tuesday, December 3**
  Adoration, following 9:00 am Mass • OPC Chapel
  Tuesday Morning Coffee, following 9:00 am Mass • Hall
  Altar Server Training • 4:00 - 5:00 pm • Church
  Open Music Rehearsal • 6:30 pm • Church
  Fr. Brian Presentation • 7 - 8 pm • St. Mary Church (or LiveView)

- **Wednesday, December 4**
  Nocturnal Adoration • Fri, 9:30 am - Sat, 9:00 am • OPC Chapel
  African Community Rosary • 6:30 pm • Library
  Baptism Preparation • 7:00 pm • Mariotti

- **Thursday, December 5**
  Charismatic Prayer Group • 10:00 am • OPC
  BINGO • 6:45 pm (doors open at 3:00 pm) • Hall
  Charismatic Prayer Group • 7:00 pm • OPC

- **Friday, December 6**
  Nocturnal Adoration • Fri, 9:30 am - Sat, 9:00 am • OPC Chapel
  Protecting God’s Children Workshop • 9:00 am - 12:00 pm • Hall
  Altar Server Training • 11:00 am - 12 noon • Church
  Reconciliation • 3:00 - 3:45 pm • Church

- **Saturday, December 7**
  Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 7
  Children’s Liturgy of the Word • 8:30 am Mass
  Coffee and Donuts, following 8:30 am Mass • Mariotti

- **Sunday, December 8**
  Faith Formation Events • Refer to Page 7
  NO Children’s Liturgy of the Word this week
  Coffee and Donuts, following 8:30 am Mass • Mariotti

Upcoming Town Hall Meetings

St. Mary on Sunday, December 8 at 3pm
St. John on Tuesday, December 10 at 7pm
Fr. Brian will be available to answer questions and hear concerns from our parishioners. These events are NOT parish specific, so attend the one that works best with your schedule. If you are unable to physically attend either, you can attend via LIVEVIEW. Links to each parish can be found in the right-hand column on the home page of our website.

St. John Annual Giving Tree Ministry

THE TREE IS UP, so….

Take a tag, and return the wrapped gift(s) and have back to the church ON THE WEEKEND OF December 14th/15th. Please do NOT drop off before or after this weekend, and please DO NOT leave your gifts under the tree. If you are unable to get your gifts to the church by the above referenced date, please contact Laura at (978) 251-0408 to make other arrangements.

RETURNING GIFTS ON TIME = DELIVERED ON TIME.

CALLING NEW ALTAR SERVERS

ALL youth in grade 3 and up, who have received their First Communion, are invited to become Altar Servers at the parish in which they worship.

The below dates are all at St. John’s, but open to future altar servers of both parishes. Sessions last about one hour. It is mandatory that you attend 3 training sessions.

Mondays: December 2nd and 9th at 4 pm
Tuesdays: December 3rd and 10th at 4 pm
Saturdays: December 7th and 21st at 11 am
Q. Where does the Bible say that the Church has the power to forgive sins?

A. As one strives to comprehend the theology that underlies the sacrament of reconciliation, the first question that might be asked is: from where, or better from whom, does the Church’s power to reconcile sinners arise? The short answer to that question, of course, is Jesus Christ. In both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John, Jesus explicitly grants this power to his disciples. In Matthew we read “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter said in reply, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ … ‘And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’” In John we read, “On the evening of that first day of the week, …[Jesus] said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’” The power to both loose and hold bound, then, is seen through this statement, a characteristic of the true nature of the Church. It must first be noted that this role of the Church is subservient to the reality that God alone is the one who forgives our sins. The Church’s role is to help facilitate this forgiveness by leading the sinner to recognize and repent of the sin he or she has committed. This role, though secondary to God, is still of utmost importance, for sin ultimately has a social dimension to it. There is, in a Christian context, no such thing as a truly private sin: all sin by its very nature affects the community. Therefore, it is appropriate for the community to have an important role in reconciling the person both with God and the community.

Q. If Jesus really died for the sins of the world once and for all, then why do we need confession? Doesn’t confession take away from Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross?

As Christ began his ministry, he proclaimed, “Reform your lives, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mt. 4:17) This call for reformation by the people was not new. The prophets had continually called the people to reform their lives and return to living out the covenant. John the Baptist, preparing for the coming of Christ, reinforced the need for reformation in his baptism of repentance. What was different for Christ was his claim to personally forgive sins. It is in Christ, and in Christ alone, that we find the power to heal the wounds inflicted by sin. It is through Christ and his ministry that the answer is to be found for how Christians would be reconciled after baptism. If reconciling sinners is to be considered such an important part of Christ’s mission, it would not have ended as he ascended into heaven; rather, he continued that work through his Church. This ministry of reconciliation in which the Church is united with Christ is intended to reconcile all people with God, with themselves, with each other, and with the whole of creation. The very action of the Church is to actually connect each sinner with the cross and its powerful effects in our lives.
Each year the Catholic Church gives us an incredible opportunity for a powerful encounter with Jesus. In her genius, the Church invites us during Advent to take a step back and look at who we are, what we are doing, and where Jesus fits into our lives.

Jesus came into this world at that first Christmas for you, to bring meaning and deep satisfaction into your life, to fill you with lasting joy, and ultimately to bring you to eternal happiness with him in heaven. That's what we celebrate at Christmas. Are you ready?

The word “advent” (the arrival of an important person or thing) is derived from the Latin word “adventus,” which means “coming.” For Catholics, Advent is the four-week season leading up to Christmas. During Advent we anticipate the coming of Jesus. It’s a time full of reflection, excitement, and hope. ~www.dynamiccatholic.com/best-advent-ever/about-advent
Upcoming Deep Dive Events

Lessons and Carols
Monday Evenings: December 2, 9, 16 and 23*
7:00 pm at St. John Church

Lessons and Carols is a prayer service of Scripture and song. Originating in England in the late 19th century, Lessons and Carols was originally conducted on Christmas Eve and consisted of exactly nine Lessons. It has since been adapted and can be found being celebrated throughout Advent with a variable number of Lessons. Regardless of the number of Lessons or when in the season leading up to Christmas it is observed, a Lessons and Carols service will focus on the mystery of the Incarnation and its role in salvation history. As Christ came for all, each evening will represent and honor a different culture each of the four evenings. Readings and Songs will be read and sung in the native language of that particular evening.

• December 2: Spanish • December 9: French •
• December 16: African • December 23: English •

*You only need to attend one to fulfill the Deep Dive obligation, but feel free to attend all!

Completion of a reflection sheet is REQUIRED for ALL deep dives. Downloadable or online reflection can be found on website as part of the specific deep dive page.

www.chelmsfordcatholic.org

Deep Dive Calendars can be found on our website Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/Calendars and Schedules

All Deep Dive details can be found on our website Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/ Deep Dives (choose deep dive)

Full Class Schedule can be found on our website Faith Formation/Family Faith Formation/Calendars and Schedules

December 1st Class/FGS* Schedule

Due to Thanksgiving Holiday
There will be no classes or events today!

December 8th Class/FGS* Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Grade 1 FGS: Group A</th>
<th>Grade 2 FGS: Group B</th>
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CONFIRMATION II: 4:15 - 5:45 pm Hall

*Family Gathering Session
Parents attend with their children

Follow us on
Instagram
instagram.com/chelmsfordcatholic
December 1st Class/FGS* Schedule

Due to Thanksgiving Holiday
There will be no classes or events today!

December 8th Class/FGS* Schedule

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**CONFIRMATION II**
11:30 am - 1:00 pm in Parish Hall

*Family Gathering Session*
Parents attend with their children

Lessons and Carols
Monday Evenings: December 2, 9, 16 and 23*
7:00 pm at St. John Church

Lessons and Carols is a prayer service of Scripture and song. Originating in England in the late 19th century, Lessons and Carols was originally conducted on Christmas Eve and consisted of exactly nine Lessons. It has since been adapted and can be found being celebrated throughout Advent with a variable number of Lessons. Regardless of the number of Lessons or when in the season leading up to Christmas it is observed, a Lessons and Carols service will focus on the mystery of the Incarnation and its role in salvation history. As Christ came for all, each evening will represent and honor a different culture each of the four evenings. Readings and Songs will be read and sung in the native language of that particular evening.

- December 2: Spanish
- December 9: French
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*You only need to attend one to fulfill the Deep Dive obligation, but feel free to attend all!

Completion of a reflection sheet is REQUIRED for ALL deep dives. Downloadable or online reflection can be found on website as part of the specific deep dive page.
Youth Ministry

"You, dear young people, are not the future but the now of God."
~ Pope Francis, World Youth Day Homily, Panama

The Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative’s Youth Ministry program seeks to ensure that the young people of the Collaborative feel known, valued, and loved by God and by their parish community. By providing opportunities for youth to encounter Christ in their lives and connecting them with mature Christian mentors, youth ministry strives to equip and empower our young people to be lifelong disciples of Jesus.

Please signup 10 days PRIOR to your requested date by contacting Barbara at dwsmiths@comcast.net or (978) 649-6745. We meet in St. John’s parking lot at 3:15 pm and arrive back by 7:30 pm.

RSVP by THIS Wednesday, December 18th if you wish to serve Friday, December 27th

Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. - 1 Timothy 4:12

HOUSE OF HOPE: LOWELL

We are looking for volunteer youth/parent teams to spend 2 hours on Thursday evenings (6-8 pm) playing with young children whose parent(s) are receiving Life Skills training. Please contact Laura Zatta at lkzatta@gmail.com.

The final scheduled date for 2019 is...
This THURSDAY December 5th

$15 Advent Wreath Kits (includes candles)
$5 Advent Candle Sets

Available for purchase according to the following schedule:

**The Parish Offices**
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Wednesday from 9:30am - 5:00 pm
Friday from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Sunday from 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

**St. Mary Parish Hall**
during Sunday class times

**St. Mary Parish Center**
Sundays from 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

**Proceeds will benefit our Faith Formation Program. Thank you for your support!**

The colors of the Advent wreath...

Purple has traditionally been the primary color of Advent. This hue symbolizes repentance and fasting, as denying oneself food is one way Christians show their devotion to God. Purple is also the color of royalty and the sovereignty of Christ, also known as the "King of Kings." So, purple in this instance demonstrates the anticipation of and reception of the coming King celebrated during Advent.

Pink (or rose) is also one of the colors of Advent used during the third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday in the Catholic Church. Pink or rose represents joy or rejoicing and reveals a shift in the season away from repentance and toward celebration.

The results are in....

- 128 Dinners Served
- 53 Volunteers
  - Cooks, Servers, Ticket Sellers,
  - Set-Up & Clean-Up Crews
- $1,312 raised
In order to promote communication and transparency throughout the Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative, you are encouraged to forward any comments and concerns you may have directly to the Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils.

**COLLABORATIVE PARISH COUNCIL**

Parish council matters can be sent to: CollaborativePPC@chelmsfordcatholic.org or 978-256-2374/ 978-251-8571, ext 145

Current Council Members are ...

**St. John Members**

- Angela McMaster (co-chair)
- Mike Condor
- Scott Davidson
- Katrina Horan
- Beth Jacavanco
- Drew Jubinville
- Ellen St. George
- Augustine Tweeken
- Ray Wagner (secretary)

**St. Mary Members**

- Peter Lando (co-chair)
- Laura Conte
- Rob Donnelly
- Karen Drake
- Jessica Hägg
- Cathy Latina
- Lori McDonald
- Steve McMillan
- Alma (Chicki) Rigazio
- Paul Therrien

**ST. JOHN FINANCE COUNCIL**

Finance matters concerning St. John’s can be sent to: SJ.FC@chelmsfordcatholic.org or 978-251-8571, ext 146

Current Council Members are …

- John Bagni
- Paul Brzezenski
- John Anthony Volpe
- Jeff Brown
- Celeste Dunn
- Grace Ann Steed

**ST. MARY FINANCE COUNCIL**

Finance matters concerning St. Mary’s can be sent to: SM.FC@chelmsfordcatholic.org or 978-256-2374 ext 147

Current Council Members are …

- Armand DiLando
- Lauren Desforje
- Jack Parsons
- Ted Powers
- Paul Therrien

If you would like to submit a notice for the bulletin, please submit it no later than 12 NOON, TWO Fridays prior to the weekend in which you would like to have it published. Submittals should be emailed to christine@chelmsfordcatholic.org or via US Mail to the Parish Offices at 115 Middlesex Street, North Chelmsford, MA, 01863, ATTN Christine. We will do our very best to accommodate your request.
One day while we were living in Watertown, in our three-bedroom apartment, my parents decided to go out for dinner. It was something that they rarely did as they had five kids and not a lot of money. They got one of our older cousins to come over and babysit. Shortly after my parents left, we somehow managed to get the babysitter out of the house. Then we locked all the doors and windows so she could not get back in. She stood at the door knocking and begging us to let her inside. It got to the point where she was actually in tears. We all, of course, were standing at the door laughing away. We really thought this was the funniest thing we had ever done. Unbeknownst to us, our dad forgot his wallet and had to come back to get it. Well, when he came to the door, he was not happy. All we heard was, “This door better be opened now!” On hearing that, we all ran to hide. Where we thought we could hide from my dad I am not sure, but we tried. Let me just say that Dad clearly taught us that what we did was not a good idea, and it was never to happen again.

We were sure we were safe, but the problem was that we were not prepared for when my Dad actually returned. And ultimately, that is what the season of Advent is all about. We need to be aware that Christ is at the door of our hearts. Jesus is waiting right now for us to open that door to Him and to truly let Him into our hearts. Through our baptism, Christ is intended to be the center of our lives. We received a candle on that day to represent the light of Christ which entered into our hearts. And we are told that this light must be kept burning brightly until meet Christ. The implication of this picture is that we must open the door so that Christ, who is the Light of the World, may shine his light into our lives.

So, we need to ask ourselves, how can we do this—how do we open the door to Christ? There are many different ways, and the first and most important is prayer. We cannot have Christ really in our hearts if we are not praying daily. Prayer must be the priority of our lives, and not when you can fit it in. If you are too busy to pray, then you are saying that you are too busy to have a real relationship with Christ. This Advent let us make a resolution as we begin the liturgical new year to add prayer to our lives. We must set aside time each day dedicated only to God. I would ask you to spend 10 minutes of each day in prayer. Find a place where you are comfortable and begin simply with the Our Father, praying it slowly and truly listening to what you are saying. Follow that with a reading from scripture, choosing one of the Gospels and slowly meditating on it. Possibly just use the Gospel for the coming week and sit with it for a few minutes. Then offer to God whatever petitions are in your heart. And finish with a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Jesus teaches us “...Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’ Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

We are also called to be present for those in need. It is not simply about helping our family, but as Christ makes clear, we are responsible to see all people as our brothers and sisters. Anytime we turn our back on those in need, we are turning our back on Christ, and we are slamming the door of our heart in the face of Christ. We are called to bring the light of Christ to others. Our reaching out to others is not only about giving money: it is also about trying to see how we can bring Christ to others and uphold the dignity of their lives.

And finally, let us be open to Christ by taking an important step and going to Confession. I recognize that many people believe this sacrament is outdated or old fashioned. And yet, Christ is the one who instituted the sacrament of Confession and gave it to us as a gift. If Christ considers Confession important, then we should also. The sacrament calls forth from us humility and contrition, and the recognition that we are sinners in need of God’s grace and mercy. If we are not able to face our own brokenness and need for God’s mercy, we cannot really open our hearts to Christ.

Christ is knocking at the door of your heart right now. He is calling to you to prepare the way for his coming. Are you ready to open the door to Christ, or will you try to hide from Him?

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,
Letting Go- Oh the Agony of it!

Actively letting go is a little more pro-active than when you are forced to let go. It can bring great relief. Except for the agony of it! It is not the same as passively letting go. Like when you have no choice; when life rips things away or gets suddenly interrupted by a sudden loss. I’m talking about a decision to let go of something or someone that only Jesus can heal or take care of.

I have learned, often the hard way, and only through experience that there is always more to let go of. Our life is a journey of constant surrender. When we surrender to the realization that we cannot fix everything, we are released from the burden of trying to figure it all out. And sometimes we have to let go of the same thing over and over again until it is finally truly gone, a weight lifted, an arrow pulled from the wound.

Letting go is painful in varying degrees. Depending on how far it stretches you is equal to the pain you feel. It leaves an emptiness, a place that the thing or person took up, that you then have to ask Jesus to fill up for you. When you find the strength to be tough enough to let go, you cross over a sacred line. And on the other side, His tenderness is waiting for you. He’s just been waiting for you to release that which you were holding onto. Often you can’t avoid the pain that surfaces when you commit to the letting go and the longer it takes to see His grace working as a counter balance. I have learned that acceptance is really obedience and obedience means intimacy with the God who stands there waiting patiently for you to get there - to accept what you have to offer over to him so that he can be with you in the pain, help you heal and show you how to move forward.

I’ve had to let go of a dizzying amount of things: a child I longed for, people I loved, trusted mentors, a spiritual father, an income I could have had, my picture of what my ministry should look like, vacations as I knew them, health I took for granted, a lifestyle I cherished, friends moving on...and on and on it goes.

Painful things. But I’ve surrendered to the endlessness of it. And it’s a resolution that softens my spirit. It is a resolution of surrender to the One that I trust to handle it all for me; the things out of my control.

Deep in my soul, beneath limits of time, and fantasies, and things along the way that I thought I could fix, is the freedom that has been pulling me forward my whole life right into His sacred heart. I had to let go of all my priceless treasures that were outside of my control and give it all to Him.

I’m still shedding, actively letting go and healing wounds. I’m not waiting until I’m ready to let go. I’ve waited long enough. Carried stuff long enough. Longed long enough for lightness. For that tender place, of quiet, and sacred relief, on the other side of courage. And you know what? In every instance of actively letting go, I have found the reality of truly living by faith for He has never let me down. So, take a deep breath and decide to just let go.

Celebrate the Saints This New Year!

This weekend is the First Sunday of Advent, marking a new year in the Catholic Church, and with that we might consider a new year’s resolution. One possibility is to become more knowledgeable of the canonized saints by reading about their lives or from their writings. In doing so, we seek greater communion with God and His Church by imitating the saints’ myriad lives of holiness. We honored and revered these righteous men and women just a month ago on November 1st, All Saints’ Day.

On the Solemnity of All Saints most especially, and whenever we beg the aid of the glorified Souls in Heaven, we the Church Militant, all those baptized here on earth seeking the Kingdom of Heaven, pray to the Church Triumphant, all those who have received their eternal reward in Heaven, for their intercession to God on our behalf and the Holy Souls in Purgatory, called the Church Suffering. Together the three comprise the Communion of Saints, which we profess in the Apostles’ Creed.

Not only should we pray to the saints in Heaven for their assured assistance, but we also should investigate and study their paths to holiness and steadfastness to the Catholic Faith. Indeed, as we pray to and remember the canonized Catholics of yore, we recall with wonder and awe the lives of the men and women who ultimately gave their lives to the crucified and resurrected Lord. Thus we try to imitate their virtues according to our state in life. And in this undertaking, we recognize that a multitude or diversity of lives of holiness make up the Communion of Saints, including faithful fathers and mothers, holy priests and bishops, virgins and consecrated religious, and most amazingly, the holy martyrs, those who suffered horrendous torment and death for Christ rather than deny Him.

Some saints were for a time worldly men before their conversion to the Church, such as Saint Augustine, bishop of Hippo, and Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscans. We marvel at the piety of other saints who even in their youth were united to Christ, like Saints Joan of Arc, Aloysius de Gonzaga, Dominic Savio, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Maria Goretti. Every one of these holy men and women are saints because they sought out and embraced true diversity: their unique vocation in life as sons and daughters of God, shedding their old, sinful selves and taking on Christ as their new, real self.

At the end of Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis concludes, “Until you have given up yourself to Him you will not have a real self. Sameness is to be found most among the most ‘natural’ men, not among those who surrender to Christ. How monotonously alike all the great tyrants and conquerors have been: how gloriously different are the saints.”

In coming to know and love the various saints, we uncover our own unique calling from God, which in general is the same: a life of holiness, radically united to Christ and His Bride, the Church. The truly Catholic understanding of diversity, therefore, is rooted in the Communion of Saints and hence in unity amongst a multitude of vocations, all of which involve conversion of heart and love for the Lord.

Let us go out to the world spreading stories of the great heroes and heroines of the Catholic Faith! Let us celebrate and promote the saints of the Catholic Church this new year!
This week at all St. John’s Masses, and next week at St. Mary’s Masses, we will hear from a representative of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Together, with a diverse network of collaborators, they serve the elderly poor locally in Somerville, MA. They offer the neediest elderly of every race and religion a home where they are welcomed as Christ, cared for as family and accompanied with dignity until God calls them to Himself. For more information on the work that they do, please visit www.littlesistersofthepoorboston.org

A special second collection, following their presentation, will be taken up to support their work.

Due to an early submittal to the printer because of the Thanksgiving holiday, the collection figures for the weekend of November 23rd/24th, will be posted in December 7th/8th bulletin.

Online Giving Programs: visit www.chelmsfordcatholic.org.
Links to both programs can be found on the right-hand side of home page.

In last week’s bulletin, the Operating Budget for FY 2020 First Quarter ending September 30, 2019 for both parishes was published. Additionally, it was available as a handout following all Masses. If you would did not see it, or would like to review again, or ANY previously published reports since the launch of our new site, they can be found on our website. Under the Stewardship tab, click on Financial Reports (the image to the right is what you will see). Simply click on the report you would like to view. We are working on putting all past reports, since the inception of our Collaborative, on this page so all will be available for viewing.

If you have any issues viewing any of these reports, please contact Christine at ext 214.

Upcoming Workshop Offering

Saturday, December 7th
9 am - 12 pm • St. John Parish Hall
Registration required...

From the home page of our website, click on Protecting God’s Children under the Parish Life tab

All employees and volunteers, aged 18 years and older, who work with children, youth, or the elderly in the Archdiocese of Boston are required to participate in the Virtus, Protecting God’s Children program. This one-time workshop aims to educate parish adults in recognizing the signs and symptoms that indicate a child is being abused or exploited in some way, offer protective practices with a specific plan to prevent child sexual abuse, and instruct on reporting incidents of abuse.

“The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic God’s giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves.”

St. Nicholas of Myra
Feast Day: December 6
“Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord” - Responsorial Psalm 122

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
**DECEMBER 1, 2019**

“I’m never getting enough rest! How can I possibly be ‘asleep?’” In a world of jam-packed schedules and high anxiety levels, physical rest may be hard to come by. Yet relentless pursuit of our to-do lists and social calendars may keep our minds off of the things that really matter. Jesus knows all too well a pattern of busy, harried ignorance. “In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ... they did not know until the flood came and carried them all away ... two men will be out in the field ... two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.” When it comes to the spiritual life, we can be at work or at relaxation and still be spiritually asleep.

Each year, we are called back to remember the essential things. God comes to save His people. He becomes flesh to dwell among us. Supernatural light pierces the world’s darkness and our own. Advent wakes us up. “Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.” Every Advent, we prepare to celebrate Christ’s first coming at Christmas, and we anticipate his second coming at the end of time.

“At an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” There’s another hour, too, both known and unknown. It’s the present moment. Whether it’s a lazy Saturday morning or a major business proposal, whether it’s attending a kindergarten play or an elderly relative’s bedside, at every moment the Lord wants to enter into our hearts. This Advent, let’s pray for the grace to stay alert. Christ is coming soon.

**THE GREAT THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT, THOUGH OUR FEELINGS COME AND GO, GOD’S LOVE FOR US DOES NOT.**

C.S. LEWIS

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**Chelmsford Catholic Collaborative**

**Christmas Family Movie Night presents**

**THE STAR**

**THE STORY OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS**

**Friday, December 20, 2019**
**7:00 - 9:00 pm St. John Church Hall**

Wear your PJ’s • Bring a cozy blanket
Popcorn and drinks provided
Have fun with family and friends
Visit with St. Nick

In the Spirit of Giving, we will be accepting donations of new, white socks for both women and men in need.
~Thank you!

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You are Cordially invited...

Jesus invites us to dwell within His Presence so that you may come to know the breadth and depth of His love, mercy and kindness that He shows to us. While it’s nice to read or study about the love and mercy of God, how radically different it is from experiencing His love and mercy. We invite you to carve out a few extra minutes each week to be still before God in both of our Adoration Chapels. Come with all your concerns, anxieties and worries; all your hopes and desires; all your fears and unmet dreams; all your sins and what burdens you.

**St. Mary Parish Center Chapel: 33 North Road Chelmsford**

*we are specifically in need of Saturday 11-12 and 12-1 adorers*

To commit to an hour or sign up as an adorer, visit www.stmary.weadorehim.com or contact Heather at lhannaway@chelmsfordcatholic.org or (978) 256-2374

Thursdays... 3:00 - 9:00 pm / Fridays... 7:30 am - 9:00 pm / Saturdays... 9:30 am - 3:00 pm

**St. John OPC Chapel: 115 Middlesex Street No Chelmsford**

To sign up as an adorer, contact Joe at joseph.ricciardi@gmail.com

First Friday Nocturnal Adoration (Sep-Jun)
following Friday 9 am Mass; concludes 9 am Saturday morning

Monday - Wednesday following 9 am daily Mass
If you would like to request that a Mass be celebrated for a specific intention or person, please call the parish office. A donation of $10 per Mass intention is requested to be made at the time that you schedule your intention.

**St. John**

**SAT, NOV 30**
4:00 pm: Mary Louise Murray: 13th Anniversary

**SUN, DEC 1**
8:30 am: Gerald P. Cole, Jr.: Memorial
10:30 am: For the People of the Parish

**MON, DEC 2**
9:00 am: Collaborative Members of Spiritual Society and Sanctuary Fund

**WED, DEC 4**
9:00 am: Jennifer Pfaff: 3rd Anniversary

**THUR, DEC 5**
9:00 am: Sarah Sullivan: Memorial

**FRI, DEC 6**
9:00 am: Felice Dandurand: 3rd Anniversary

**SAT, DEC 7**
4:00 pm: For the People of the Parish

**SUN, DEC 8**
8:30 am: Pat and Betty Ciampa: Memorial
10:30 am: Mary Moran: Memorial

St. Mary

**SAT, NOV 30**
4:00 pm: David Kent: Memorial

**SUN, DEC 1**
9:00 am: Fran and Jim Durkin: Memorial
11:00 am: For the People of the Parish
6:00 pm: Ruth and John O’Regan: Memorial

**TUE, DEC 3**
7:00 am: Robert H. Garrity: 23rd Anniversary

**SAT, DEC 7**
4:00 pm: For the People of the Parish

**SUN, DEC 8**
7:00 am: Marguerite Farley: Memorial
11:00 am: Carmen Stella: 7th Anniversary
6:00 pm: Renison and Polo Families: Memorial

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There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to give birth, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to tear down, and a time to build up.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.
A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;
a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.
A time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away.
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to be silent, and a time to speak.
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

-Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

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**St. Mary Memorial Altar Flowers**
Parishioners are invited to donate a floral arrangement, to be displayed on the altar in memory of, or in honor of, a loved one. The requested donation for an arrangement is $40, and includes an acknowledgement in the bulletin.

If you would like to donate altar flowers, please call the parish office.

**Rose for Life**

Someone special you’d like to honor? You can do that by having a rose Signifying your intention placed in the church, as well as having your intention published in the bulletin. To book a Rose for Life, contact the parish office. Be sure to let them know at which parish you would like the rose placed. The suggested offering for a rose is $5.00.

This week’s St. John Rose for Life:

**Sarah Sullivan**

This week’s St. Mary Rose for Life:

for the Protection of the Unborn

Roses Provided by Mahoney’s Garden Center

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**“Your Word Is A Lamp Unto My Feet And A Light Unto My Path”**

_Psalm 119:105_

**MONDAY, DEC 2**
Isaiah 4: 2-6
Psalm 122
Matthew 8: 5-11

**TUESDAY, DEC 3**
Isaiah 11: 1-10
Psalm 72

**WEDNESDAY, DEC 4**
Isaiah 25: 6-10
Psalm 23
Matthew 15: 29-37

**THURSDAY, DEC 5**
Isaiah 26: 1-6
Psalm 118
Matthew 7: 21, 24-27

**FRIDAY, DEC 6**
Isaiah 29: 17-24
Psalm 27
Matthew 9: 27-31

**SATURDAY, DEC 7**
Isaiah 30: 19-21, 23-26
Psalm 147
Matthew 9: 35-10:1, 5-8

**SUNDAY, DEC 8**
Isaiah 11: 1-10
Psalm 72
Romans 15: 4-9
Matthew 3: 1-12